

## **University of South Carolina Lancaster**

Act 629 – Summary Reports on Institutional Effectiveness

Fiscal Year 2003-2004

### **INTRODUCTION**

As an integral part of the University of South Carolina system, USC Lancaster strives to assist its pre-baccalaureate students in attaining and refining their skills in the areas of communication, critical thinking, cultural literacy, and personal development. Students in the specialized associate degree programs (business, nursing, criminal justice) focus on those areas most appropriate to their professional and educational needs, with the ultimate goal of achieving the following outcomes (which may be viewed on the campus webpage, <http://usclanaster.sc.edu/acadstu/GEG.htm>):

#### **Communication Skills**

USC Lancaster helps students read effectively and attain a basic familiarity with the basic texts of Western and other cultures. In the area of writing skills, USC Lancaster students work to develop the ability to write effectively for both academic and professional audiences. In addition, USC Lancaster helps students learn to listen critically and speak effectively to a group.

#### **Critical Thinking**

USC Lancaster helps students acquire analytical reasoning abilities and exercise informed value judgments. USC Lancaster students also work to develop mathematical and or computational skills.

#### **Cultural Literacy**

USC Lancaster strives to give students an understanding of the history and culture of Western civilization as well as provide some exposure to other cultures. USC Lancaster also recognizes the centrality of science and technology to modern culture; therefore, USC Lancaster students also are offered opportunities to increase their understanding and familiarity in these crucial subject areas.

### **ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT**

At USC Lancaster, academic advisement is viewed as a critical element in student success and thus is a cooperative effort between students, faculty, staff and administration. Immediately upon application to USC Lancaster, students are assigned an academic advisor, based on their intended major or area of concentration. While most academic advisors at USC Lancaster are full-time faculty, the campus also utilizes some part-time and adjunct faculty, as well as academic support staff from programs such as the Opportunity Scholars Program and the Academic Success Center, to meet student needs. A complete listing of advisors is found at the campus webpage online, <http://usclanaster.sc.edu/admissions/major-advisor.htm>.

Academic Advisors are available to incoming freshmen at all three orientation sessions during the summer months, and are required to schedule and maintain a reasonable number of office hours per week during the regular semester so as to be available for student advisement.

### **CONDITIONALLY-ADMITTED (CAP) STUDENTS**

While admissions criteria to USC Lancaster are identical to those of USC Columbia, the campus is allowed to accept students conditionally who do not meet all requirements necessary for regular admission to the University. These students are designated as Conditionally Admitted (CAP) students and are subject to the following guidelines (see USCL web page, <http://usclanaster.sc.edu/admissions/Freshmen.htm>).

1. Academic advisors carefully assist students in selecting courses for their first year, based on high school transcripts, SAT scores, and USCL assessment tests.

2. Students are permitted to designate a major in any field of their choice and, in most instances, the courses taken will be applicable toward a degree.
3. Students are required to earn a minimum of thirty (30) credit hours at USC Lancaster and have at least a 2.0 grade point average before they will be allowed to transfer and enroll at the USC Columbia campus. (Many majors, however, require a higher GPA. Students wishing to transfer into such programs must meet all requirements of the program.)

Students designated as CAP are assigned special advisors who have undergone on-campus advisement training. CAP advisement workshops and “refresher” sessions are held at the request of the Admissions Office or the Associate Dean for Academic & Student Affairs. CAP advisors are encouraged to review each student's transcript carefully, assess the student's strengths and weaknesses, and assist with the preparation of an academic schedule which will enhance the likelihood of student success. CAP advisors also explain to the student that in many cases, he or she will not complete all degree requirements within the normal time frame (usually four semesters). The main goal for the CAP Advisor is to form a reasonable schedule for the student that will conclude ultimately with the awarding of the academic degree being sought.

### **USCL COUNSELING CENTER AND THE OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

In addition to regular academic advisement, USC Lancaster maintains an on-campus **Counseling Center** which provides academic, career and personal counseling to students, as well as to faculty, and staff. Entering students are contacted by letter early in the fall semester and are encouraged to make individual appointments to discuss the results of their College Student Inventory taken during orientation. The CSI helps to identify and address academic, career, and personal concerns the student may have. The Counseling Center can make those students aware of services available on campus which may assist them in succeeding in their college career.

In the spring semester, students who have earned less than a 2.0 grade point average are contacted by letter and encouraged to make an appointment to discuss their academic progress and how they may be able to improve their academic performance. Also, in the spring semester, students who are undecided about their majors are contacted by letter to make appointments to discuss possible majors and careers. The Counseling Center can administer computerized tests, such as the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory and SIGI Plus, to assess a student's interests and the careers that might suit them. Information about the center is available online at <http://usclancaster.sc.edu/cnslcent.htm>.

The **Opportunity Scholars Program** (Student Support Services) is one of the five TRIO Programs funded by the United States Department of Education. The Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP) is designed to help first generation college students make the adjustment to college life. OSP helps motivate students to obtain a four-year degree (and beyond) from the colleges of their choice. Through academic advisement and developmental support, the OSP staff will strive to provide students with a solid foundation on which to help them succeed in college.

In terms of academic advisement, OSP staff monitor student schedules, courses, grades, etc. The program also sponsors group sessions (as well as individual assistance) for students to improve time management, study skills, and test-taking skills. The program also provides academic tutoring, cultural events, and assistance with career planning, college transfers, and financial aid issues. Additional information on the program is available online at <http://usclancaster.sc.edu/osp/index.html>.

## ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Policies regarding academic advisement at USC Lancaster are established by the administration based on the recommendations of the Academic Advisory Committee of the Faculty Organization, which regularly reviews all advisement procedures. During the spring semester of 2004, USC Lancaster administered an Academic Advisement Survey to students in seven selected classes. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of student satisfaction with the current process. The results will be distributed to the Academic Advisory Committee for use in making recommendations for changes to the process. The following is a summary of the survey findings:

QUESTION	RESPONSES
1. Please rate the availability of your academic advisor.	Outstanding – 84 (50%) Above Average – 38 (22.6%) Satisfactory – 31 (18.4%) Marginal – 9 (5.4%) Unsatisfactory – 6 (3.6%)
2. How would you rate your advisor's assistance in the development of your educational plans?	Outstanding – 83 (49.1%) Above Average – 34 (20.1%) Satisfactory – 34 (20.1%) Marginal – 9 (5.3%) Unsatisfactory – 9 (5.3%)
3. Please rate your advisor's assistance in helping you to identify and evaluate alternative educational plans and the consequences of your decisions.	Outstanding – 81 (48.2%) Above Average – 34 (20.2%) Satisfactory – 37 (22.0%) Marginal – 11 (6.5%) Unsatisfactory – 5 (3.0%)
4. In regard to answers on academic policies, procedures, resources, and programs, how would you rate your advisor's assistance?	Outstanding – 80 (48.2%) Above Average – 34 (20.5%) Satisfactory – 38 (22.9%) Marginal – 10 (6.0%) Unsatisfactory – 4 (2.4%)
5. Please rate the timeliness and accuracy of the information you received from your advisor.	Outstanding – 82 (48.8%) Above Average – 39 (23.2%) Satisfactory – 32 (19.0%) Marginal – 9 (5.3%) Unsatisfactory – 6 (3.6%)
6. I know where to find information regarding advisement-related University policies and procedures.	Yes – 144 (86.2%) No – 23 (13.8%)
7. I know the academic requirements (general education, change of campus, graduation, etc.) of the major I am considering.	Yes – 152 (90.5%) No – 16 (9.5%)
8. I know where to find information regarding the academic requirements of my major (or anticipated major.)	Yes – 145 (86.3%) No – 23 (13.7%)
9. I have a good understanding of the academic preparation and credentials which will be needed for my career (or anticipated career).	Yes – 149 (89.2%) No – 18 (10.8%)
10. My current status at USC Lancaster is	Freshman – 104 (61.9%) Sophomore – 43 (25.6%) Junior – 18 (10.7%) Senior – 2 (1.2%) Non-degree seeking – 1 (0.6%)

11. Please give an overall rating of your advisement experience.	Outstanding – 79 (47.0%) Above Average – 38 (22.6%) Satisfactory – 39 (23.2%) Marginal – 6 (3.6%) Unsatisfactory – 6 (3.6%)
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The results of the survey indicate that the vast majority of students are satisfied with their academic advisement experiences at USC Lancaster. Written comments which were received on the surveys, however, indicate some areas which are in need of refinement and improvement. These will be studied by the Academic Advisory Committee, which will make its recommendations for changes to the Faculty Organization and to the administration during the fall semester of 2004.

The success rates of USC Lancaster students in meeting their academic and professional goals is due in large part, we believe, to the campus advisement process. In its 2003-2004 report of the USC Lancaster campus, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education noted that under Performance Funding Indicator 7A (Graduation Rate: "Success rate" defined using first-time, full-time, degree-seeking student graduation within 150% of normal program time), USCL students performed successfully at a rate of 69%, the highest score achieved by any USC regional campus or technical college in South Carolina. In the same report, under PF Indicator 7D (Scores of Graduates on Post-Undergraduate Professional, Graduate, or Employment-Related Examinations and Certification Tests), USCL students performed successfully at a rate of 84.6%.

The positive survey results and the high success rates of our students demonstrate that USC Lancaster's current system of academic advisement is very effective. While proud of past success, however, the Academic Advisory Committee will work closely with the administration to continue to refine and improve the process in order to meet the growing and ever-changing needs of the students we serve.